

NASH SR., CHARLES DURHAM (1924 ~ 2011). The following is an article published upon the death of Charles Nash Sr., a former member of the Public Safety Commission. The article was published in the March 29, 2011 edition of the Austin American Statesman.

Charles Nash of Capitol Chevrolet dies at 87

By Shonda Novak

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Charles Durham Nash, who for decades steered Capitol Chevrolet in Austin, was passionate about the business, immersing himself in every aspect of the dealership that was his life's work for more than 60 years.

Nash died Monday at a local hospital after an illness. He was 87. "He was a car dealer until the very end," said his daughter, Nancy Nash Harper, who now runs Capitol Chevrolet with her sons Thomas Harper IV and William Charles Harper. "He never went a day without wanting to know what was going on at the dealership."

Harper said her father remained chairman of the board of the dealership and attended its weekly management meetings until about a month ago. They talked twice a day. In the mornings, he would ask how he could help her that day and how the business was doing. In the evenings, Nash wanted a tally of how many cars were driven off the lot that day.

Ralph Wayne , a former Texas legislator and friend of Nash, said Austin has lost "a true icon."

Nash and his family have been "great contributors to building the business community in Austin," Wayne said.

Nash and close friend Roy Butler, a former Austin mayor who died in 2009, "were leaders in building the city with jobs and businesses," Wayne said.

Nash was a director of Austin National Bank and chaired the board of trustees of the Headliners Club and the Texas Automobile Dealers Association .

Bill Wolters, president of the association, said Nash's legacy "is huge for Texas and the Texas Auto Dealers Association."

"Charles Nash has been a person who has worked very hard throughout his life to benefit other people and other organizations, and ours was one of the most fortunate to have had him as a leader for decades," said Wolters.

In his 40-year involvement with the association, Wolters said, Nash never missed a meeting or failed to cheer people up, and he "genuinely cared about every person on our staff, every dealer and every generation of dealers that has come along."

Nash's father, John Harvey Nash, founded Capitol Chevrolet in 1935 at San Jacinto Boulevard and Fifth Street downtown.

About 1951, the dealership moved to the western edge of downtown. Charles Nash once owned land at all four corners of Fifth Street and Lamar Boulevard that included the dealership, a used car lot and a body shop.

The dealership moved to South Austin in 1998, to make way for Whole Foods Market's new headquarters and flagship store.

Nash's career in the auto business started at age 24, after he served in the Army as a supply officer during World War II.

His son, Chuck Nash, said his father said that through his decades in the business he'd "seen it all," including the General Motors bankruptcy, something he said his father never could have imagined happening.

Chuck Nash, who owns a Chevrolet, Buick and GMC dealership in San Marcos, said he has fond memories of his father's dealership.

The younger Nash recalls being in the showroom when the new models, covered with canvas, were brought in on convoys. In those days, cars had to be "kept under wraps" until they were unveiled with much fanfare during a "national show date," usually in early September.

Along with his son and daughter, Nash is survived by his wife of 63 years, Dorothy ; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Services will be at 3 p.m. Wednesday at Tarrytown Methodist Church , with a private burial; Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home's Lamar location is handling the arrangements.